

X

DAVID • ARLEM • MARTINEZ • VILLARRUBIA

-FACTOR

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DIRECT EDITION

X-FACTOR

IN A SOCIETY WHERE MUTANTS AND FORMER MUTANTS ALIKE FEEL THREATENED BY THE WORLD AROUND THEM, THEY TURN TO THEIR FIRST, BEST LINE OF DEFENSE: WHENEVER TROUBLE ARISES: X-FACTOR, THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE AGENCY FOUNDED BY MADROX, THE MULTIPLE MAN.



AFTER ANNOUNCING THAT X-FACTOR WAS OPPOSED TO THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT, JAMIE MADROX GOT HIMSELF GOOD AND HAMMERED, WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING, AND DISCOVERED THAT EITHER HE OR A DUPE OR BOTH HAD SLEPT WITH BOTH SIRYN AND MONET...AND NEITHER OF THE WOMEN KNOWS ABOUT THE OTHER.

MEANWHILE SCIENTIST HENRY BUCHANAN, WHO WORKS FOR SINGULARITY INVESTIGATIONS, SOUGHT OUT X-FACTOR AND TOLD THEM SI WAS WORKING ON A VIRUS THAT WOULD KILL ALL MUTANTS...WHICH SENT JAMIE INTO A FIT OF FURY SINCE IT BROUGHT UP MEMORIES OF THE LEGACY VIRUS. GUIDO WAS ASSIGNED TO DRIVE BUCHANAN OVER TO A BANK WHERE BUCHANAN HAD A SAFE-DEPOSIT BOX FILLED WITH EVIDENCE...EXCEPT, TO THE SHOCK OF EVERYONE READING LAST ISSUE, GUIDO—AFTER RECEIVING A PHONE CALL FROM SINGULARITY HEAD MR. TRY-P—KILLED BUCHANAN IN COLD BLOOD...WHICH IS LIKE KILLING SOMEONE IN WARM BLOOD, EXCEPT THE AIR-CONDITIONING WAS ON.

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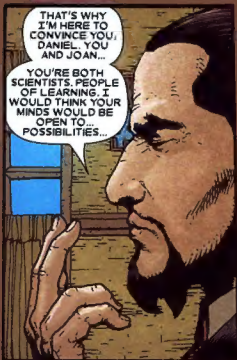
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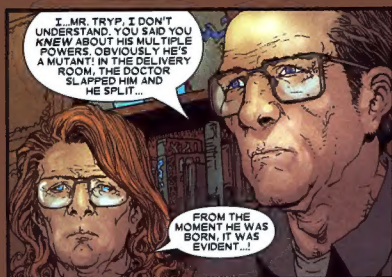
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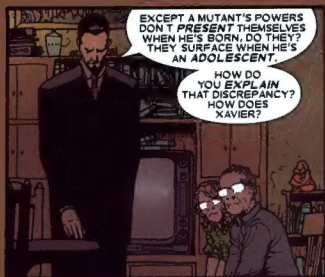
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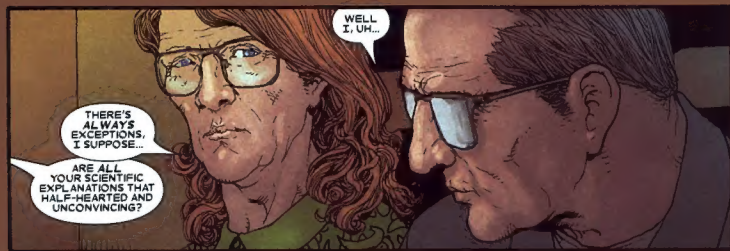
I...MR. TRYP, I DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU SAID YOU KNEW ABOUT HIS MULTIPLE POWERS. OBVIOUSLY HE'S A MUTANT! IN THE DELIVERY ROOM, THE DOCTOR SLAPPED HIM AND HE SPLIT...

FROM THE MOMENT HE WAS BORN, IT WAS EVIDENT...



EXCEPT A MUTANT'S POWERS DON'T PRESENT THEMSELVES WHEN HE'S BORN, DO THEY? THEY SURFACE WHEN HE'S AN ADOLESCENT.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT DISCREPANCY? HOW DOES XAVIER?



WELL I, UH...

THERE'S ALWAYS AL WAYS EXCEPTIONS, I SUPPOSE...

ARE ALL YOUR SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATIONS THAT HALF-HEARTED AND UNCONVINCING?

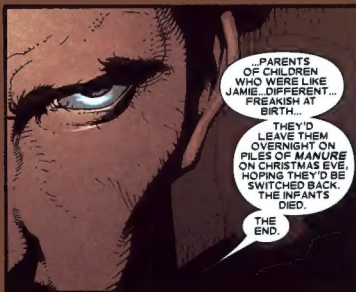


LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT CHANGELINGS.

YOU MEAN THE OLD LEGENDS ABOUT FAIRIES AND GOBLINS SWITCHING OUT HUMAN BABIES FOR THEIR OWN?

LEGENDS. STORIES. THE ARENA OF "ONCE UPON A TIME."

VERY WELL. ONCE UPON A TIME...



...PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO WERE LIKE JAMIE. DIFFERENT... FREAKISH AT BIRTH.

THEY'D LEAVE THEM OVERNIGHT ON PILES OF MANURE ON CHRISTMAS EVE, HOPING THEY'D BE SWITCHED BACK. THE INFANTS DIED.

THE END.



"HOMO SUPERIOR" DID NOT SPRING INTO EXISTENCE OVERNIGHT.

BEFORE THEM, THERE WERE BEINGS LIKE JAMIE, LIKE MYSELF, "CHANGELINGS," "REPLACEMENT PEOPLE." "KILLCROPS..." THAT'S MY FAVORITE. WE WERE BLAMED FOR POOR HARVESTS. HEH.

AND NINETY-NINE TIMES OUT OF A HUNDRED, WE WERE MURDERED IN INFANCY.



BUT NATURE IS *EVER* ADAPTIVE. "HOMO KILL CROP" GAVE WAY TO HOMO SUPERIOR, AND THE LETHAL CHANGE WAS BURIED UNTIL ADOLESCENCE, *UPPING* THE SURVIVAL LIKELIHOOD.

EVERY SO OFTEN, THOUGH, A KILLCROP STILL... WAIT FOR IT...

CROPS UP.



JAMIE IS A GENETIC THROWBACK TO AN EVEN MORE DANGEROUS TIME. HIS NEEDS WILL BE DIFFERENT.

YOU DARE NOT ENTRUST HIM TO ANYONE BUT ME.

WELL, WE... APPRECIATE YOUR COMING BY... BUT WE TRUST OURSELVES TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT BY OUR BOY.



IF I MAY ASK... OUT OF SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY...

WHAT IS MY KILLCROP POWER?

YES.



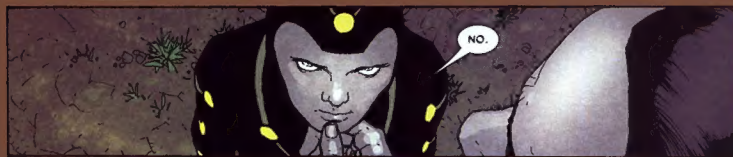
THEY ARE... VARIED. THE MOST PERTINENT TO YOU WOULD BE ELEMENTAL MANIPULATION. WINDS, FOR EXAMPLE.

WHY, I COULD CREATE A TORNADO THAT COULD KILL THE BOTH OF YOU, AND NO ONE WOULD THINK IT ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN ACT OF GOD. AND WHO KNOWS?



PERHAPS THEY'D BE RIGHT.

GOOD DAY.



⊗ TODAY...

HE...
WHAT?
DID YOU
SAY...?

HE
DISAPPEARED.

HOW COULD
BUCHANAN HAVE
DISAPPEARED?!

YOU WERE
SUPPOSED TO BRING
HIM TO THE BANK, STICK
WITH HIM, AND BRING HIM
BACK! YOU'VE MADE A
MESS OF IT, YOU--

SORRY.
I'M SORRY.

GUIDO...
JUST...WALK ME
THROUGH THIS. YOU
BROUGHT HIM TO
THE BANK...

SHUT UP,
MONET, OR
I'LL--

AND THE BANK LADY SAID
HE HAD TO BE ALONE WHEN
HE OPENED THE LOCK BOX.
RULES OR SOMETHIN'.

THESE DAYS,
WITH THE GOVERNMENT
BREATHING DOWN EVERY
SUPER-GUY'S NECK, I DIDN'T
WANNA CAUSE A SCENE.
Y'KNOW? CAUSE US
MORE GRIEF.

SO I
WAITED IN THE
LOBBY.





I SMELL
BLOOD ON YUR
HAND. TRACES OF
SPITTLE.

YE WIPED
IT CLEAN, BUT
THE SCENT'S STILL
THERE. HIS
SCENT.

BUCHANAN'S.

WHAT?
RAHNE, WHAT'RE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT? I TOLD
YOU--

AYE, I
KNOW WHAT
YE SAID...

THIS IS NUTS!
WHY WOULD I HAVE
HIS BODY FLUIDS ON
MY HANDS?

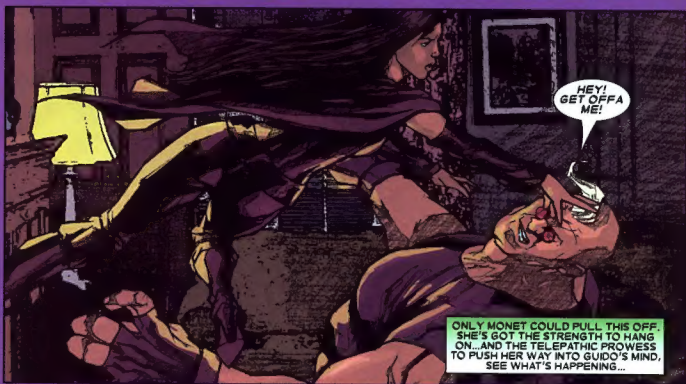


THAT'S
WHAT I'D LIKE
TO KNOW.

MONET...

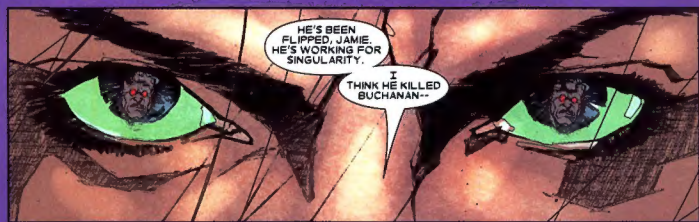


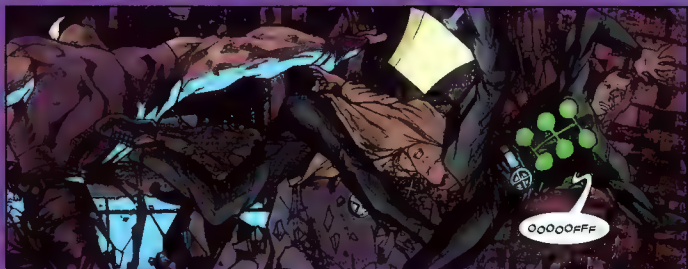
TAKE
HIM.



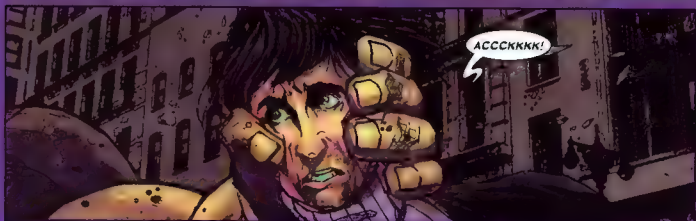
HEY!
GET OFFA
ME!

ONLY MONET COULD PULL THIS OFF.
SHE'S GOT THE STRENGTH TO HANG
ON...AND THE TELEPATHIC PROWES
TO PUSH HER WAY INTO GUIDO'S MIND,
SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING...









YOU'RE
NOT IN YOUR
RIGHT MIND,
GUIDO.

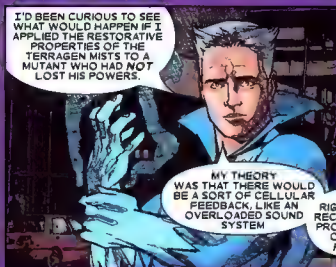
JAMIE'S
RIGHT. THIS, RIGHT
HERE...IT'S ANOTHER
PERSONALITY



That's...
encourage
her...

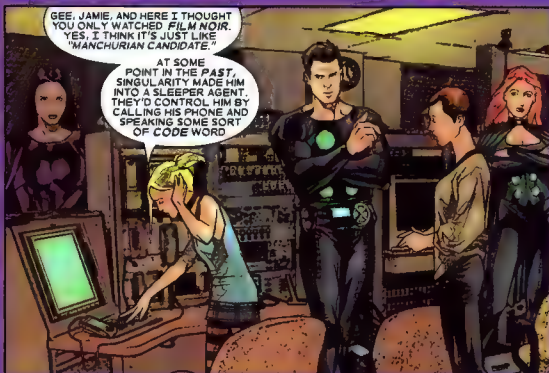
YOU
SHUT UP,
TOO, RICTOR,
OR--







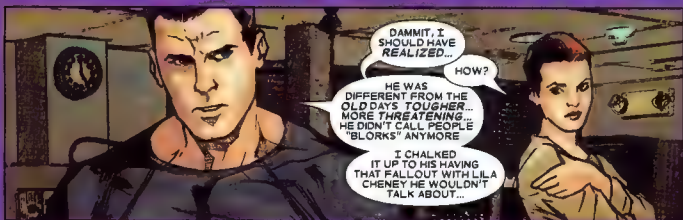
"LET ME GUESS: IT WAS LIKE 'THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE.'"



GEE, JAMIE, AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU ONLY WATCHED FILM NOIR. YES, I THINK IT'S JUST LIKE "MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE."

AT SOME POINT IN THE PAST, SINGULARITY MADE HIM INTO A SLEEPER AGENT. THEY'D CONTROL HIM BY CALLING HIS PHONE AND SPEAKING SOME SORT OF CODE WORD

SEE, RIGHT HERE: INCOMING CALLS ON HIS PHONE LIST A NUMBER TRACEABLE TO SINGULARITY INVESTIGATIONS.



DAMMIT, I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED...

HOW?

HE WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE OLD DAYS TOUGHER... MORE THREATENING... HE DIDN'T CALL PEOPLE "BLOKS" ANYMORE

I CHALKED IT UP TO HIS HAVING THAT FALLOUT WITH LILA CHENEY HE WOULDN'T TALK ABOUT...

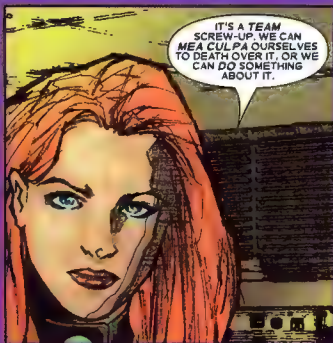



YOU KNOW...IT MIGHT BE HE COULDN'T RECALL WHAT HAPPENED WITH LILA AND WAS COVERING THIS KIND OF THING COULD CAUSE MEMORY GAPS.

LIKE THE OTHER DAY, WHEN WE WERE TALKING ABOUT SEAN CASSIDY DYING AND HE THOUGHT IT WAS THE ACTOR. GUIDO WOULD HAVE KNOWN WE MEANT BANSHEE

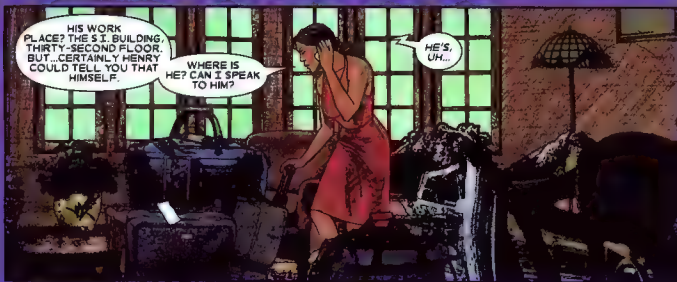
INSTEAD OF GETTING MAD, I SHOULD HAVE--

OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH.





NO, HENRY
DOESN'T EVER DO
S.I. RESEARCH HERE.
HE ALWAYS MAKES A
POINT OF KEEPING
HOME SEPARATE
FROM WORK.



HIS WORK
PLACE? THE S.I. BUILDING,
THIRTY-SECOND FLOOR.
BUT...CERTAINLY HENRY
COULD TELL YOU THAT
HIMSELF.

WHERE IS
HE? CAN I SPEAK
TO HIM?

HE'S,
UH...




INCOMMUNICADO

...INCOMMUNICADO
AT THE MOMENT, MA'AM.
AT A SECURE LOCATION
FOR HIS OWN SAFETY

HE'S
WORRIED ABOUT
HER

BUT HE'S
CONCERNED
ABOUT YOU




I KNOW. HE
TOLD ME TO PACK
MY BAGS AND START
DRIVING. I WAS
ALMOST OUT THE
DOOR WHEN YOU
CALLED.

HE HAD THE
RIGHT IDEA. DO YOU
HAVE A CELL PHONE
NUMBER SO WE CAN
STAY IN TOUCH?



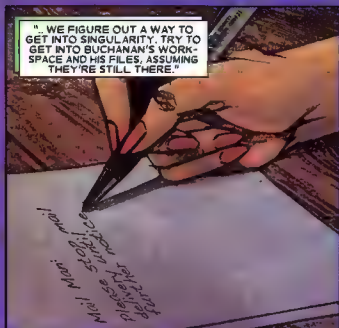
555-2516...
OKAY, GOT
IT.

NOW GET
ON THE ROAD,
MRS. BUCHANAN.
WE'LL BE IN
TOUCH.



"OH, YEAH, AND BY THE WAY,
YOUR HUSBAND'S DEAD AND
ONE OF OUR GUYS KILLED HIM
BUT DON'T WORRY, WE'LL
PRORATE YOU FOR OUR
SERVICES."

NOT NOW,
MONEY, RIGHT
NOW...



"WE FIGURE OUT A WAY TO GET INTO SINGULARITY. TRY TO GET INTO BUCHANAN'S WORKSPACE AND HIS FILES, ASSUMING THEY'RE STILL THERE."



"OBVIOUSLY, WE GO IN AT NIGHT."

"A LITTLE TOO OBVIOUSLY, RAHNE. THEY'LL HAVE SECURITY. THEY'LL HAVE GUARDS. A NIGHT SHIFT. PROBABLY EVEN BOOBY TRAPS."



"WE DON'T NEED STEALTH. WE NEED CONFUSION AND EVERYONE GONE. A SITUATION WHERE WE CAN GET IN AND OUT IN SHORT."

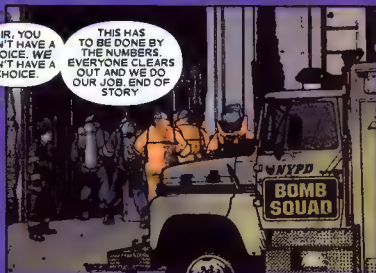


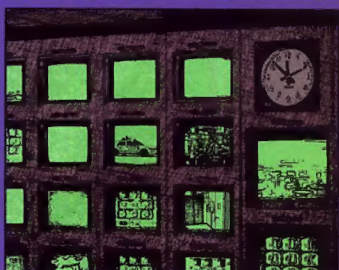
"...WE NEED THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE."



"HELLO. MY NAME IS DAMIAN TRYF"

"CAN I HELP YOU WITH THOSE?"







I HEAR
YOU, MIMI, WE'RE
ON IT.

HOW LONG
'TIL THE REAL
SQUADS REACH THE
THIRTY-SECOND
FLOOR?



I'M HOPING
AT LEAST HALF AN
HOUR, SINCE THEY HAVE
TO CLEAR THE FIRST
THIRTY-ONE
FLOORS.



YOU DO REALIZE
CALLING IN FAKE
BOMB SCARES IS,
OH, WHAT'S THE WORD...?

A
FELONY?

THAT'S
IT.



SO IS GENERATING
A VIRUS TO KILL MUTANTS
AND HYPNOTIZING SOMEONE
INTO MURDER. I'M FIGHTING
FIRE WITH FIREMEN. MY
CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR.



I LOVE
IT WHEN YOU
TALK TOUGH.



DID SHE
JUST GRAB
YOUR RUMP?

SHE WAS
PUSHING ME
ASIDE.

BECAUSE IT
SURE LOOKED
LIKE--

C'MON,
LET'S GO.



X'D OUT PART 2

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X-FACTOR

Welcome, my friends, to the lettercol that never ends. Peter David here, welcoming the many new readers who have joined our ranks. They came for the CIVIL WAR, but they're staying for the noir. And I'm pleased to say that our reputation is spreading. We here at X-Central were flattered to find out that X-FACTOR was nominated for a Harvey Award for "Best New Series." One of the reasons I know this is because DC Comics actually sent me a copy of the Harvey ballot and urged me to vote for all DC titles. Yeah. That's gonna happen. So lessee what you have to say about our recent efforts. Letters, as always, are edited for length but not content:

Dear X-Central:

I have to admit, as a teen I didn't read too many comics, outside of X-MEN and the original X-FACTOR was far from a favorite. Who am I kidding? I hated it. However, since getting back into comics two years ago, I've seen some good things and some bad things. I feel your writing style is a breath of fresh air, and you seem to actually focus more on drama than the action. There is nothing better than seeing how a character can develop through trials and tribulations. X-FACTOR and NEW X-MEN are currently my favorite X-titles.

I do have some suggestions and questions. A lot of readers don't seem to like Monet at all, but I think they fail to realize what you are trying to do with the character. It seems to me that she has a lot of insecurity issues about herself, but we've seen her soft side, especially when the maid was killed by the actor Vaughn. I would definitely love to see more of her issues come out and let the readers understand her completely.

I understand that there is a lot going on with the X-FACTOR Team, but one thing I would like to see resolved is Rahne's relationship with Dani. Dani was going to make peace with her before HOUSE OF M started, but now that she has lost her powers, she is at the lowest point in her life—when she NEEDS Rahne. Other than that, this has been a good series. Keep up the good work.

Michael Vaden
(Via E-mail)

Boy, are you going to like X-FACTOR #13, Michael, in which Doc Samson (and we) get some further insight into what's going on in Monet's noggin. Plus her unexpected relationship with Jamie is

going to reveal some previously unknown layers. But we've no immediate plans to bring Dani Moonstar into the mix for the time being. Our aim is to focus on the relationships of the X-Factor cast, which is already large enough. We're not ruling out a possible guest shot by Dani, but no time soon.

Dear X-Central:

Hey, I just finished X-FACTOR #9. I want you to know how much I love this series. You really know how to bring the funny. Layla Miller cracks me up. You took a throwaway character and made her the star of a series. Please tell me she was serious when she told Jamie they would get married in the future. She reminds me of the files and records girl from "Angel." Season Three. I know you said this series would resemble the "Angel" TV series. Is that where you got her mannerisms from?

Christopher Goodnight
(Via E-mail)

Well, Christopher, I don't recall ever actually saying that. I know some fans have claimed there's a resemblance. I can certainly see why they say that, considering "Angel" was populated by vampires, demons, and a god, and the primary opponent was an evil law firm, whereas "X-Factor"...hmmm. On second thought, no, I can't see why they say that. As for the "files and records" girl, if you mean the creepy kid in the white room...no. She's exactly the way she was described: Nostradamus reincarnated as Wednesday Addams, although I admit some of her style is influenced by Radar O'Reilly from "M*A*S*H." As far as whether she was serious about marrying Jamie: Yeah. She was.

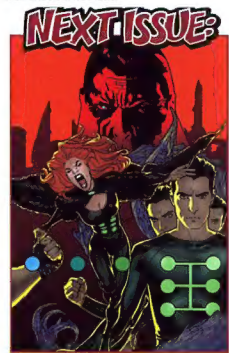
Dear X-Central:

As time goes on Dennis Calero is more and more acceptable; doesn't always happen you know! What happened to Ryan Sook anyway? He really dropped off the face, so to speak. How come Madrox and Rahne always called Cyclops Scotty in this ish, when his own teammates all called him just Scott? Does it have anything to do with Scotty Steiner????? Any Aegis appearance is okay by me; and I'm not just saying that 'cause you hyped him up with the dialogue. What does that guy's future hold? Probably nothing! Every new character in the late 90's had force field powers. But there's something going on

with the New Warriors that yer not telling us, right, Marvel? I'd love to read a new series, actually. I read all three of the others! Oh, and Quicksilver is back, huh? Does this mean they're actually gonna GO on a mission or two?! I still think X-FACTOR is okay, but what about a year or two from now, hm? Sales are bound to fall regardless, and without big changes—we still have a gent called Strong Guy on the team, ya know—this book will lag. I want to at least see a big encounter between X-Factor and the current U.S. Government strike team: Thunderbolts! And why not, right? Hey, if Aegis can show up....!

Andrew J. Shaw
(Via E-mail)

I'm really not sure where to start, Andrew, except to say that a year from now, we certainly hope that sales will continue to climb and, eventually, we'll be the best-selling mutant title in the Marvel Universe. Yes, I know. It sounds ridiculous. But hey...they laughed at Louis Pasteur when he announced the invention of the steamboat, and look how well that turned out!



FINALE!

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